

pestilence by palinopsia

Series: [a sinner once, a sinner twice \[1\]](#)

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: A lot of them - Freeform, Canon-Typical Violence, Character Study, Gen, Implied/Referenced Child Abuse, Internalized Homophobia, Issues, billy has, just issues

Language: English

Characters: Billy Hargrove, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Steve Harrington

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Summary:

Billy punches Steve Harrington's pretty face exactly eleven times.

pestilence

Author's Note:

i have watched the scene with billy's dad and the one where he beats up steve an unhealthy amount of times and i had to write this. aka 1.4k words of me reading waaay too much into it

title is taken from the four horsemen by metallica

What did we talk about?

Billy can hear the blood rushing in his ears, ringing, roaring as he sends Steve flying onto the ground and lets out a wild, hysterical howl. And he's never felt more alive.

His skin prickles with anticipation, his breathing rough, coming in short bursts. He can hear the beating of his heart, too fast, too loud, but not loud enough to drown out his father's voice in his head. It's infuriating. Billy wants it to stop. Wants him to just fucking stop.

He can still feel the sting of where his father had hit him as his own fist connects with Steve's jaw.

It's ecstatic. Billy feels like he can finally breathe again.

What... did we... talk about?

He knows he won't be able to stop, that whatever ounce of self-control he has in him is crumbling, shattering, and fast, when he hits him again. He'll regret it later, when he can finally think again. When he sees him again, and the realization of what he's done sinks in. Because Steve really does have a pretty face. Shame he doesn't know when to shut the fuck up.

Maybe, in another life, if the circumstances were different, if *Billy* were different, things would've turned out very differently.

Respect and responsibility.

But they're not. Billy is not.

So he hits him again. And it feels so, so good.

Yeah. That'll teach him not to fuck with Billy Hargrove. Steve thinks he can tell him what to do? No one tells Billy fucking Hargrove what to do. No one.

Now, apologize to Susan.

Again. And he hates it. He hates that he's like this. Hates how much anger he has inside him. It's like a disease, a sickness, festering. He feels it burning inside him, consuming, and he can feel it in his veins, spreading like wildfire through his chest, his limbs. It's so easy to give into it. Billy loves that feeling. The feeling of power. Control.

He knows it's not real. It doesn't matter.

I'm sorry, Susan.

He feels empty. Like a shell of a person, held together by nothing but anger. Hollow, and brimming with rage. But the anger is strong. Billy feels strong. He revels in it. His skin is on fire.

Again.

Yeah. Steve thinks he can stand up to Billy? Thinks he can beat him? That he's better than Billy?

Nothing about his behavior is okay.

Again. He's fucking wrong. Billy will prove him wrong. And he'll enjoy it. Because he can.

But he's going to make up for it.

Again. Because Billy can do whatever the fuck he wants, and right now, he wants to beat the living shit out of Steve Harrington and his stupid, pretty face.

Part of him wishes it didn't have to be like this. It's not even Steve's fault, really.

You know whose fault it is.

And he hates it. He hates it, he hates it, he hates it.

Yours.

But in that moment, he hates Steve more. He needs to. He knows what happens when he lets that hate consume him. He doesn't want that.

He's going to call whatever whore he's seeing tonight—

No, what he wants, what he *needs*, is to hear the *crack* of broken bones and bask in crimson glory, the solid weight of Steve Harrington pinned to the ground beneath him anchoring him to the present as he beats him to a bloody pulp.

Again.

King Steve looks pathetic like this, small and helpless, handsome features covered in blood. Then something shifts in his brain and an image of him straddling Steve in an entirely different context pops up in Billy's head, and he feels another flare of anger rising up from his stomach, this time traveling lower, turning into something else entirely.

Billy hates *that*, too.

—and cancel their date.

Again.

And his hands hurt, and he knows his knuckles are bleeding, will be bruised and swollen soon, but he couldn't care less. Right now, the satisfying feeling of his fist crashing into Steve's face is the only thing that matters in the world, the dull *thud* music to his ears. He can barely hear the kids screaming at him to stop over the sound of rushing blood in his ears.

And then, he's gonna go find his sister.

Again. It makes him feel safe. It makes him feel sick.

Rotten to the core. Worthless.

Like the good, kind, respecting brother that he is.

And again. He doesn't notice how Max has stayed quiet. He doesn't notice the pain anymore, either. It's just a refreshing, throbbing ache now. It feels good. Billy feels good. Hell, he feels fucking great.

And that's when he feels it, a sharp pain in the side of his neck, and immediately comes crashing down from his high.

He doesn't bother to look at Steve, assess the damage as his anger shifts and he quickly stands up, vision blurring.

There is nothing but overwhelming confusion for a moment, until his hand reaches the side of his neck, and he pulls out the syringe. He looks down at it, trying to make sense of the situation, but he can't think straight. He feels dizzy, lightheaded.

"The hell is this?" he asks, slurring the words. His voice is weak. The world is spinning.

He can make out Max in front of him, wide eyed and horrified. But there's something else there, too. He recognizes it. He knows that feeling. That surge of power, sickeningly good and wonderfully addictive.

And suddenly, there's an unexpected moment of clarity in which Billy can see everything perfectly clearly, despite his haziness and murky thoughts. And a horrifying realization makes its way to his stomach, and stays there.

She's growing up to be just like him.

And it's completely new to Billy, what he feels just then. Like he's just been slapped in the face. And it hurts. Much, much more than he'd expected.

But it quickly turns into anger. Like it always does. Billy wonders, sometimes, if that's the only thing he's capable of feeling. But he knows that's not true. There are worse things than anger inside him. Terrible things.

“Oh shit, what did you do?” He knows the answer before he finishes speaking.

And he laughs as he falls, feeling warm and sluggish, because that’s all he can do. It’s funny. It’s fucking hilarious. He got knocked out, *sedated* like some wild animal, by a thirteen year old girl.

A thirteen year old girl who was now towering above him with a goddamn nail bat. And it doesn’t even occur to Billy to question it, in that moment, because of course she has a nail bat. Just like she has a hypodermic needle filled with a sedative. Just like she spent the entire day in some house in the middle of fucking nowhere with an eighteen year old. It makes perfect sense.

“From here on out you leave me and my friends alone. Do you understand?” Max speaks quickly, but clearly.

Isn’t that right, Billy?

“Screw you,” he mutters, too tired to even open his eyes. He feels as if he’s about to pass out.

The bat landing right next to his crotch is more than enough to wake him up, though, and he panics, if only for a second, suddenly he realizing that he’s completely powerless in this situation.

“Say you understand! Say it.” Max demands, and Billy can’t fucking look at her. He sees himself in her, and he can’t stand it.

And when she screams, “Say it!” all Billy can hear is his father.

Isn’t that right?

And suddenly he’s in his room again, his father grabbing him by the front of his shirt, pushing him against the shelves. He can feel his punch, and it *aches*, and he feels absolutely helpless. Like he’s been turned inside out. Exposed. Vulnerable. The anger gives way to something much darker, then, and it hurts. It hurts so much.

“I understand,” he slurs, darkness creeping into the edges of his vision. He’s past the point of coherent thought, barely conscious. He’s faintly aware of the sting of tears.

Yes, sir.

“What?” Her voice is distant, unreal, like in a dream, in complete contrast to his father’s, loud and clear as it rips through his thoughts.

I’m sorry, I couldn’t hear you.

“I understand,” he repeats, audibly this time.

Yes. Sir.

It’s the last thought he has before passing out.

Author's Note:

any feedback/constructive criticism is more than welcome!

Works inspired by this one:

- [One more time](#) by [lhni](#)